

## Defenses Against Dangers

### 1 Timothy 4:6-11

#### Introduction

Paul has provided Timothy a description of dangers that faced the Church in Ephesus (vv.1-5); and now Paul will encourage Timothy in some possible defenses against those dangers (vv.6-11). The dangers included a coming apostasy (a falling away from the truth; see 2 Thessalonians 2); the Holy Spirit's warnings that Satanic spirits would energize and influence false teachers denying basic essential Christian teachings and those false teachings would provide excuse for false living. One of the sure signs of a false teacher and false teaching is they **preach moral purity and practice moral failure**. They are hypocrites (v.2) and they are hardened in heart (seared or cauterized in conscience ) and they are willing to abandon essential Christian teaching (v.3). The dangerous false teachers read the Bible and then try to explain away its message!

Paul provides a list of counter-measures. A counter-measure is an act or a plan taken to avoid danger or prevent or reduce injury. **How do we defend ourselves against false teachers and false teaching?** Paul's answer to Timothy; “. . .*the Word of God and prayer*” (v.5). The Word of God settles issues and prayer to God settles the heart. Remember the false teachers were advocating and advancing social and cultural restrictions (*don't marry*) and dietary restrictions (*commanding to abstain from certain foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth* (v.3).

For servants in the church this passage (vv.6-11) and the passages that follow (vv.12-16) provide a kind of extensive list of do's and don'ts in ministry. We must not waste our time arguing over foolish ideas and silly myths (v.7). Later Paul reminds Timothy that he must not allow his youth to intimidate or dissuade him from Christ's commands and instructions (v.12); or neglect his spiritual gift (v.14). Would you like to be a good servant of the Lord Jesus Christ? Would you like to avoid or reduce the dangers that come with false teachers and false teaching? Then you will need to learn to spiritually feed yourself (v.6); avoid spiritual nonsense (v.7) and exercise yourself in the disciplines of godliness (v.8). This includes thinking carefully (v.9); a willingness to work hard and bear unjust criticism (v.10). This will sometimes require confrontation and specific instruction (v.11).

#### Learn To Feed Yourself (v.6)

*1 Timothy 4:6 (NKJV) 6If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.*

*“If you instruct (point out NIV); Put in remembrance (KJV)—hypothemi—place under or lay (see Romans 16:4)—a reference to teaching the truth.*

Instruct; point out; put in remembrance place under—put in a place where it can be easily found.

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The reference “*in these things*” serves as a connective to Paul’s precious statement (vv.1-5); but might reference everything covered thus far (chapters 1-4). Timothy has been well nourished in the words of faith and of good doctrine. Timothy has understood and faithfully followed the good teaching of Paul. Now Timothy is tasked to faithfully impart what was faithfully entrusted to him.

Paul belonged to the first generation of apostles and teachers. Timothy belonged to the second generation. The gospel and its message relies on the faithfulness of each generation to remain faithful to the whole of God’s Word and the whole of the Gospel. Billy Graham famously said that God had called him to preach not simply to the generation that came before or after but to his generation. The good minister of Jesus Christ instructs the brethren (adelphos) carefully about the dangers of the false teachers and their false teaching (vv.1-5). The leader—the servant—the pastor—exalts Jesus Christ as Lord. The good minister faithfully teaches nourishing food—healthy food—sound doctrine (1:10). Sound means healthy (it shares the word for hygiene). **Teaching that promotes spiritual health.** The good minister of Jesus Christ feeds on the Word of God so that he or she may be able to feed others. What is the suitable diet for the servant (or minister) of Jesus Christ? The words of faith, good doctrine, carefully followed!

We feed our children. The wise parent makes sure the child will one day feed herself.

### Avoid Foolish Speculations (v.7a)

*7But reject profane and old wives’ fables,*

What does Paul mean? Good food promotes good health. Poisonous food is a recipe for physical illness. Unhealthy doctrine results in spiritual deprivation that leads to spiritual illness! **Avoid spiritual nonsense. Promote godliness. Spiritual nonsense distracts us from our healthy spiritual objectives.**

What are we to reject? Profane translates the Greek word *bebelos*. The word appears five times in the Greek New Testament. Twice it is a reference to a person (1 Timothy 1:9 and Hebrews 12:16). Three times it describes something (1 Timothy 4:7; 6:20; 2 Timothy 2:16). Some scholars suggest the word means the opposite of sacred—or that which is worldly. It reference to people it seems to suggest godless or irreligious or absent piety. The Latin equivalent was *profanus*—*pro*—*before*—*fanum*—*the temple*—*the place outside the temple*—*and so outside the sacred (hieros)*. In short profane means disconnected from that which is holy or sacred or godly.

It may mean anything that leaves God out of the picture. Some scholars believe Paul is making a reference to the Gnostic teachings which are scornfully described as profane and unholy *mythoi*—*worldly*. I suspect it means the wild and foolish speculations and attempts to explain things apart from the revelation of God in Christ.

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Some people love spiritual nonsense. The Amplified New Testament uses the expression ‘irreverent legends—profane and impure godless fictions, mere grandmother tales and silly myths.’ The good minister rejects all false teachings—which are nothing more than frivolous speculations and false notions of men (see *The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible; 1 Thessalonians—Philemon; p. 174*).

What else might this include? Fables. Superstitions. Speculations. Figments of the imagination.

### **Exercise Yourself To Godliness (vv. 7b-8)**

*7b. . . and exercise yourself toward godliness.*

*8For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.*

Notice the words *exercise* in verses 7 and 8. Paul uses the verb in verse 7 (*gymnazo; present active imperative*) and the noun in verse 8 (*gymnasium; nominative; singular fem.*).

There is value in bodily exercise. The text doesn’t say no value—but neither does it say enormous profit. Paul will contrast godliness with physical exercise. Both require effort and exertion. The reference is not simply a metaphor for the physical activity of exercise—but more likely the disciplined training that is required. A work out is a work out. But training is the discipline of working out on a regular basis.

What does Paul mean by godliness? I think he means a right attitude about God and towards God but also it means the proper response to God. Paul has already mentioned godliness (see 2:2; 3:16). The emphasis is always on what Warren Wiersbe called “constant Christian living.” Godly living is living godly. False teachers and false teaching often provided an excuse for ungodly living.

We don’t simply believe the Word of God. We practice the Word of God. We practice the Word of God to reflect Christ’s character and inform our conduct in this world. This might include things like bearing one another’s burdens; anticipating hardship, relieving suffering and experiencing persecution. We train and discipline ourselves in this present world for the current benefits it provides and for the eternal benefits in the next world. *Godliness is profitable for all things.*

### **Cultivate Reason And Purpose (v.9)**

*9This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.*

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What saying is that? In context it seems to be exercise godliness. Can we include all that Paul is saying? Does this include his warnings about false teachers and false and foolish teaching (vv. 1-4)? Does this include instructions about food and fellowship (vv.4-5)? Exalting Christ (v.6)? Nourishing ourselves and others in Christian Faith and Christian living (v.6)? Avoiding foolish and frivolous speculations (v.7)? Understanding and exercising spiritual disciplines that lead to godly or Christlike conduct (v.8)?

The good minister is willing to embrace and accept Paul's instructions. Paul wrote about one fourth of the New Testament. Paul instructs his readers to believe the gospel (Matthew; Mark; Luke and John). Paul's instructions deserve acceptance and respect. Paul invites us to think about and accept his teachings. The good minister reasons, thinks, considers and commits his or her life to Jesus Christ and others. This is the very definition of purpose. Knowing Jesus and living for Jesus is the very definition of what it means to do good. Paul wrote; "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief (1 Timothy 1:15). Later Paul writes (2:11-13) "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." Think of these faithful sayings like compass points. These faithful sayings will point you in the right direction!

### Work Hard And Bear Unjust Criticism (v.10)

*10For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.*

There is a bit of mystery surrounding this verse. The majority of medieval manuscripts translate the Greek word *oneidizometha*—but some scholars think it makes more sense that the word is *agonizometha*—from the verb *agonizo*—*compete in an athletic contest*. Which would mean the text reads either labor and suffer reproach (KJV-NKJV) or toil and struggle (Goodspeed) or labor and strive (NASB-NIV).

In either case the meaning leads to trusting and serving the living God who serves as Savior.

The word labor here means 'to break a sweat'. Some jobs do not require perspiration. Does this mean that Paul broke out in cold sweats dictating or writing these words to Timothy? No—it means that ministry is hard work. The labor that Paul describes and gives means to work to the point of fatigue and exhaustion. We labor—we give—until we are spent. We exert every effort and we employ every resource for the sake of God and Christ and the gospel. The reproach that Paul speaks about is unjust criticism. We are **willing to work and we are willing to bear unjust criticism or misunderstanding or ridicule or mocking.**

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Discipleship is training. And like athletes or soldiers we have to prepare for resistance, difficulty hardship. The metaphor that Paul employs is like the agony experienced by athletes in order to compete at the highest levels. The soldier prepares for war. The soldier must kill or be killed. The athlete competes for the prize. Little league is different from the major leagues. Olympic training and professional training requires mental and physical discipline. Training requires that certain things be set aside in order to accomplish the most important thing.

Paul trusts in the living God who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. There are those who reject the revelation of God and Christ. We understand there are those who have a seared conscience who dismiss the Biblical worldview. We understand there are those who see life through the filters or lens of sin. We know that lies and sin cloud judgment and deceit blinds eyes. Jesus Christ is God's Savior to the world.

Our Calvinist friends might argue that Christ is the Savior of all people in the sense that His work of Calvary's Cross is sufficient to provide salvation for everyone—and would refer us to chapter 2:6. Clearly God desires all men to be saved. Clearly some will accept God's offer of salvation in Christ and others will reject God's offer of salvation in Christ. Some see the expression "Savior of all men" not as salvation from sin but rather a deliverer in the temporal sense. These teachers speak of temporal benefits like common grace; or the promotion of goodness or the restraint of wickedness or restraint from sin. The larger question remains; "Can Jesus save everyone?" I think the answer is yes. Can Jesus save people who don't want to be saved? Can Jesus push a person quite against their will and push or pull them screaming and kicking into a the kingdom? I don't think so.

The Scripture does not impose salvation. The Bible does not promise salvation for those who reject Christ, deny Christ, deny the gospel, or deny their own sinful condition. Salvation apart from Christ? Salvation apart from faith and grace? I don't think so. Jesus reminds us that most will reject Him (the Broadway leads to destruction and the narrow way leads to life; see Matthew 25:41; 46; Revelation 20:11-15). Some have interpreted Savior of all men to mean all men will be saved. This is called universalism. But the Bible does not support the view that all human beings will eventually be saved and reconciled to God without regard to Christ and the gospel. Universalism is not taught in this passage or in the larger revelation of the Bible as a whole.

You are not saved or damned because it is your right or destiny. All have sinned. All fall short. All are condemned. But Jesus came into the world to save sinners. You can believe. You can be forgiven. You can be reconciled to God.

We toil. We labor. We exercise godliness—not to obtain eternal life—but rather so that you can hear and believe. How do we receive eternal life? We believe the gospel. Paul wrote (Colossians 1:29) "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily."

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#### Confront And Instruct (v.11)

*11 These things command and teach.*

The good minister, the faithful servant commands and teaches these things (the whole letter of Timothy); the disciples of sound doctrine (chapter 1); the disciplines of prayer and public worship (chapter 2); the disciplines of church government (chapter 3) and now the disciplines of the local pastor (see chapters 4-6). We confront error. We instruct the truth. Paul knows that all authority is in Christ. We do this with boldness, courage, conviction. We don't allow fear of men or the ridicule of culture or the hardships of life to stop us. Like Paul and Timothy we too have a divine commission a personal authorization by Jesus Himself (Matthew 28:18). "All authority is given to Me in heaven and on earth (v.19). "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew adds; AMEN.

Could commanding and teaching these things bring further danger? Renewed hostility? Increased opposition? Timothy may have been young (v.12) timid or shy! Command sounds a lot like—control. The word does not mean manipulate or coerce. Paul seems to believe that his instructions are lawful orders to those who have taken an oath to follow Jesus. The word command means to charge to declare or to transmit a message. I think here it carries with it the idea of executing a lawful order.

Spurgeon says; "Christ's *ministers* are your soul's physicians. We are not fiddlers to tickle your ears, nor confectioners to please your palates, but physicians to cure your diseases; and if you nauseate our most needful medicines we dare not withhold them, and gratify you with sugared poisons." Spurgeon is the first to admit that what we say as ministers does not always sit well on a stomach that has grown comfortable with sugar coated cliches or cultural niceties. Real medicine sometimes does not sit well in the system and sometimes it can leave an unpleasant after taste.

#### Conclusion

In the early church character as well as conduct mattered. Cyprian of Carthage said, "When appointing priests we should choose only those of spotless and upright character as our leaders." One early journal of instruction called the Didache said, "Appoint bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord—mild men, who are not out to get money, men who are genuine and approved, for they are your prophets and teachers." Do you want to be a good minister of Jesus Christ? Then prepare to defend yourself. *En guard.*

1. Learn to instruct yourself in order to instruct others. Exalt Jesus.
2. Discourage spiritual nonsense.

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3. Get in spiritual shape. Read God's Word. Live God's Word. Seek fellowship. Pray. Serve. Give. Exercise godliness. Godliness has dual benefits. Here and later.
4. Godliness requires hard work and effort. Service will often lead to criticism.
5. The Word of God provides our authority, instruction, guidance, purpose, in all things that pertain to life and godliness in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Paul is not done.** Paul will encourage Timothy to be an example to other believers (v.12); to devote himself to private and public devotion and worship (v.13). Paul will admonish Timothy to not neglect his spiritual gift (v.14) but to wholly devote himself to the instruction, admonition and directions provided by the Word of God (v.15). Reading is the scholarly study of Scripture and exhortation is a reference to preaching and doctrine to teaching.

Paul will close with a final word to persevere in the faith, and issue further warnings about teaching. These instructions will prompt more questions and require more answers.

In short Timothy will need to exercise self-discipline in public ministry (vv.7-11) and in private ministry (vv.12-16).